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DECORATION & FURNITURE

FURNISHING ON THE FRONTIER.



As a rule home-made furniture and hangings are neither beautiful to look at nor comfortable to use, yet they are not to be condemned entirely. Much depends on their surroundings; and, unlike more costly articles, the more unfavorable the surroundings the better they appear. Often in the past few months, when I have been in stately parlors bristling with grandeur or so overrun with artistic furniture and bric-à-brac that all sense of home cheer was lost, my thoughts have turned to certain rooms which had, for me at least, a charm not found in more elegant apartments.

The rooms were in one of the most unprepossessing of the forlorn buildings which make up Fort X., down on our western frontier, and the room in particular of which I write was looked on by all in the fort, both young and old, as the most attractive corner in the officers' quarters. Yet the furnishing was all done by inexperienced hands, and the most of the materials used had been procured at the small sutler's store. The room served as parlor, sitting-room and library, and had an outlook which, to put it mildly, was not entertaining. Through the windows at one side could be seen other mud-hued buildings. A flag flying in the square gave the only bit of color, if I except the glittering brass buttons and army blue which pervaded the square, and the fiery head of one young lieutenant which often flashed before the windows. Beyond the buildings were rough hills and the river. On the other side the view was across a rolling grass-covered plain over which one could look far to the northeast and realize fully, with a desolate feeling, how far away one was from home and friends.

Before the captain's wife came to metamorphose it, the room had not boasted of much furniture; a nondescript carpet, a table and chairs had made it inhabitable, but left it a dingy den. That was soon a thing of the past. The room was large. On one side was an open fire-place, of a size quite out of proportion to the amount of fire ever required in that sunny climate. It was bordered around with large, square,

badly-made, mud-colored bricks, and there was a hearth of the same material.

As may be imagined, a sutler's store, where the only material to be had in any quantity was turkey-red calico, did not afford any great opportunity for a display of individual taste. Still, turkey-red calico is not to be despised, and it is astonishing how well it looks made up into curtains and hangings. The curtains, made of the calico doubled, were put up in such a way that they could be drawn entirely to one side. A plain, straight lambrequin, with a very full ruche along the bottom, went across the top of the window. The door leading into the room beyond had been removed, and its place supplied by a similar curtain.

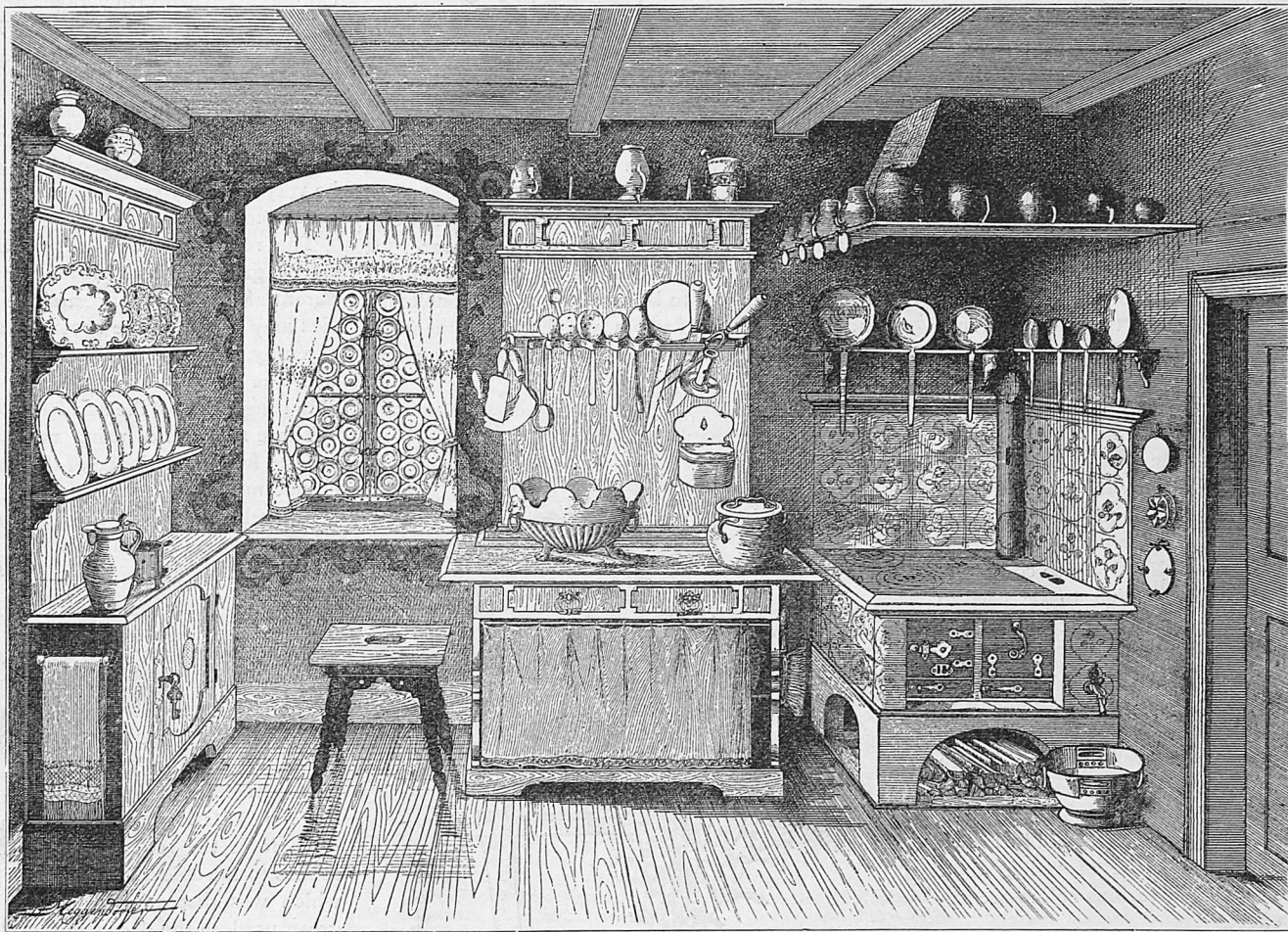
In one corner a board, perhaps twenty-four inches square, was fastened to the wall by pieces of wood which were screwed to the under side of the board and to the wall. It answered for a small table. The cover was a piece of bright-colored stuff from over

patterns by Indian hands. A wolf-skin was spread in front of the writing-table, and before the lounge and box-chair were black bear-skins.

Abject poverty, thumb-screws, and chairs evolved from barrels and boxes have always been associated in my mind as things not to be desired, but I yielded at once to the charm of the box-chair of which I write. Its situation added much to this charm. It had a place in a corner out of the way of people passing through the room. In daytime there was plenty of light from the west window near which it was placed to enable one to read as long as daylight lasted, and there was a far-extending prospect to be viewed from an opposite north window if one wished to indulge in rest and reverie. At night, a bracket lamp, placed so that its clear-shaded light beamed down at exactly the right angle, made the box-chair the favorite place in the room.

I should like to describe that chair, for it is worthy of being copied; but although I know it so well, I cannot

give all the details of the process which brought it to its present state. I do know that the box ottoman, which formed the broad low seat, was primarily a packing-box, and that skilfully arranged padding and puffing hid its humble origin. From the front of the seat, at each side, leather straps went up, with a gentle sag, to rings fastened in the wall. To these straps was fastened a piece of strong sacking, which formed the back of the chair, and both back and seat were covered by part of a bright striped Mexi-



A MODEL KITCHEN. DESIGNED BY L. MEGGENDORFER.

can blanket, which was fastened to the top of the back and the front of the seat. The chair could not be moved around, but that was not a fault, for no one ever thought its situation could be improved.

A lounge at one side of the room was made of a rough frame of boards, covered with plaitings and cushions of calico. Four movable cushions, large and puffy, were arranged in whatever way and place best suited the occupant. An Indian blanket, adorned with fearful patterns done with china buttons in a style dear to the savage heart, served for an afghan.

The writing-table and book-case was an ordinary table with a case of five shelves set on the back of it, and was the work of the fort carpenter, which is equal to saying that it was not well done. In front of the shelves was a curtain made double of the red calico and hung by small brass curtain-rings on a slender rod fastened across the top of the book-shelves. The rod was a ram-rod with large saddle buttons at each end. The cloth which covered the top of the table

the Mexican border, rich with gold and silver work, which was folded so the fringed ends hung along each side. A strip of material somewhat similar was put along the front of the mantel, which held some interesting specimens of Mexican work, a curious-shaped piece of pottery found in Arizona and an ugly jar, brought to the captain's wife by a friend who was one of an exploring expedition among the cliff-dwellers, and regarded by her as one of her dearest treasures.

Over one of the doors was a pair of magnificent antlers, a trophy of a successful chase. On the wall over the fire-place hung two immense polished horns which had once graced the head of some leader of the herd. Above them were two long-stemmed, large-bowled pipes, and Indian bows, arrows, and quivers, bright with beads and feathers. The carpet had been on the floor for years. It was of a mingled pattern, and was much the worse for wear. The worn places in front of the hearth were covered by a large mat, in which many colored grasses were woven in quaint

went over the edge, and was tacked on the under side. After the cloth was on brass-headed tacks were put around the edge of the table, and on these by rings, close enough together to make it a little full, was hung a curtain which just touched the floor. Both the upper and lower curtains were divided in the middle, and the upper one pulled away toward each side. The fronts of the shelves were edged with cloth pinked, and the lower shelf was divided into a number of compartments.

A hammock was hung across one corner of the room, and there were several arm-chairs. Altogether the room had an air of comfort which made (and makes) it a most inviting spot. To step into it out of a richly-furnished drawing-room would bring out a contrast and show its defects, but to reach it after a long scout over rough trails, and no trail at all, or after the voice of the mule-driver had been sounding in one's ears for days as the train made its slow way over the bare prairie and cactus-grown country, it looked remarkably inviting.

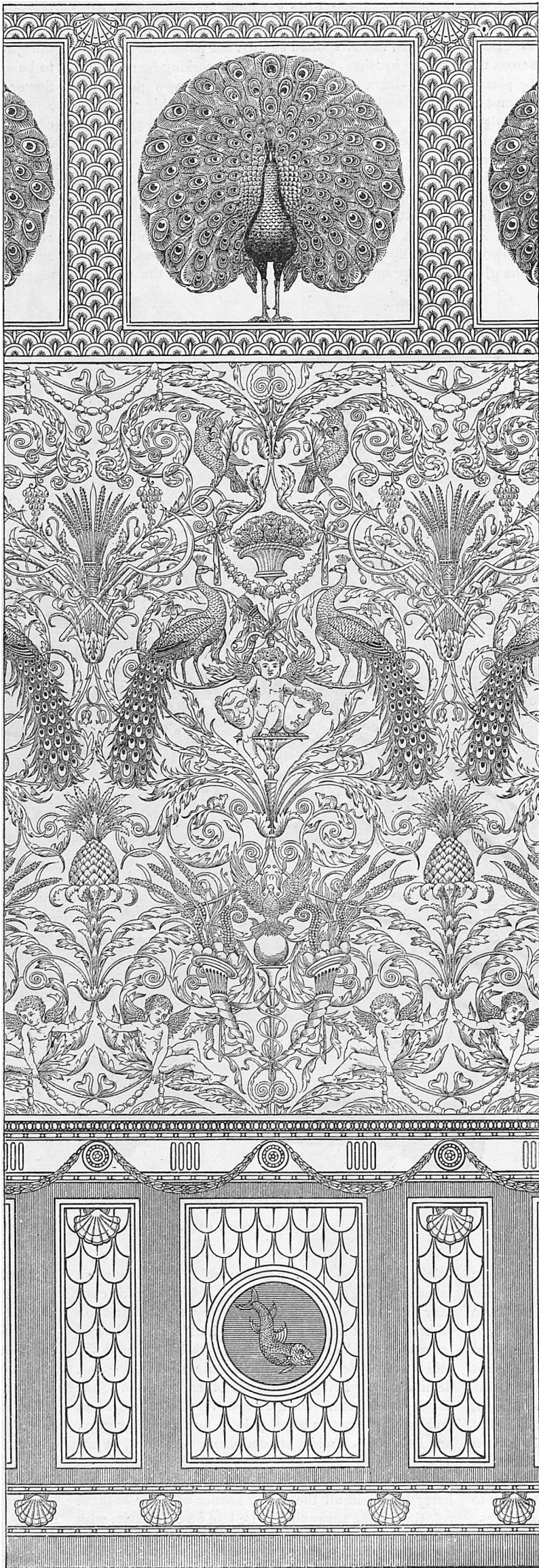
L. A. FRANCE.

PAINTING UPON ZINC.

ZINC is largely used for the groundwork of permanent church decorations, either for texts over the doorways and archways, or to make devices. It is sold in sheets, but can be cut to any size and shape, and fastened to the walls, when finished, with specially prepared zinc nails. Before receiving the letters or devices the zinc is primed with three coats of oil paints, such as are used in house-painting.

To prime, grind up red lead and mix it with linseed oil and turpentine in the proportions of two parts oil to one of turpentine. Add some patent driers, and lay the mixture on the zinc with a large painter's brush. When the coat is dry, rub it down with glass paper, and put on a second made like the first. Rub down, and apply a third coat; mix this with white lead and the powder color that will make the desired background tint, together with equal proportions of turpentine and oil and some patent driers. For a stone-colored background, add black to the white lead; for a gray, indigo and lake; for flesh and cream-colors, umber or vermilion. Rub the last coat quite smooth, and then trace upon it the outlines of the design. This, for a text, will consist of borders and letters; the letters should be quite plain ones, and the borders very distinct.

Draw the design upon a sheet of cartridge-paper with the aid of a ruler and compasses, and cut out the pattern as if for a stencil-plate; lay this cartridge-paper upon the zinc, and pencil round the outlines with a piece of black chalk. See that all the outlines are quite perfect, the letters clear, and the words divided by the space a letter would take up. Letters properly cut will each occupy a square, with the exception of the letter I; make the S by drawing a perfect O, rub out the centre part and connect the two ends with a curved line, which bring from the left side at the top, and slope to the right side at the bottom. The letters and borders clearly marked, paint them in oil colors. Use the best powder colors, and mix these with one part of copal varnish to two parts of



WALL-PAPER. DESIGNED BY WALTER CRANE.

turpentine. Mix the colors very carefully, as, if they are put on with grit in them a smooth, shiny surface is impossible.

When only painting small pieces of zinc, the ordinary tube oil colors, mixed with best japanner's gold size, can be used, but these are too expensive for large undertakings. Paint with bright colors, such as scarlet lake, cobalt, bright green, black, and Prussian blue, and make all the letters in one word of the same color. Put on two coats of color, and when the second one is dry outline every part of the work with a narrow black line, except where black is used already, which must be thrown up with a narrow gilded line. All gilding work in with best gold leaf, no composition being sufficiently durable. Gild with gilder's size, and in the ordinary manner, and do it over large spaces before the letters are painted, and after they are traced. Leave the paint to dry for ten days or a fortnight, and then varnish. Equal parts of chloride of copper, chloride of ammonia, and commercial hydrochloric acid, mixed with a quantity of water, will produce a gray ground upon zinc if there is not time to paint it in the usual way. This mixture is black when first applied and turns gray afterward.

OIL PAINTING UPON COARSE-PAPER.

BROWN, sugar, soap, gold, and drawing papers, are all fitted for the reception of oil color, and do not need any preparation; their own shades are retained to form the backgrounds, and they may be easily combined so as to paper a room or hall in such a manner that its wall is broken into a dado, middle, and frieze of contrasting or harmonizing shades without the intervention of any more costly material. These various combinations are worked out so as to imitate the Greek and Pompeian fresco wall paintings; terracotta soap paper will form a dado to cream-colored sugar paper; dark blue sugar paper and pale brown paper being used together; and stone-gray and dark blue papers, and pale cream-colored sugar papers, with pale pink soap-paper. For small surfaces, such as screens and door panels, rough brown paper, gray-greens, and gray rough drawing papers are best, the other kinds not being coarse enough.

Painting upon brown or other coarse wrapping paper, when used as wall paper, is generally done with arabesque or geometrical designs, so as to mark out the lines of the dado or frieze with ornament, or to cover the frieze or dado, the latter with a diaper pattern, and the former with a large and bold design. What is known as water-color stencilling is here brought into use, and the work is proceeded with as follows:

Select the various colored papers and have them pasted to the wall by a paperhanger. Then size them down with glue size melted in hot water and strained from all impurities. Trace out the pattern for the border upon thick strips of brown paper, twenty-four inches long, lay them on a piece of glass, and with a sharp knife cut away all the parts inclosed between the lines forming the design, so that only those parts of the paper that form the groundwork remain. Before